

and compiled by Mrs. H. Spottiswoode, who also did all the business arrangements concerning its publication. . . .

A feature of this year's work has been a series of pilot activities undertaken by the C.E. to see if they offered a possible new field or method of action. The first of these were social evenings to which were invited leading Nationalists and non-Nationalists of *the business and professional world, to discuss what could be done to ease the present race tensions in South Africa* . . .

The second very successful pilot venture was a Brains Trust on Constitutional Reform undertaken in the strong Nationalist constituency of Moorreesburg, 70 miles from Cape Town. This was arranged with even more than her usual brilliance of concept and attention to detail by Mrs. Stett, and was an unqualified success.

## New Opportunities

It is the hope of the C.E. that now that it has been proved that such meetings can be held, other Regions will try to carry out both these ideas in their own regions, openly in the name of the Black Sash. . . .

In conclusion, I would like to say that although there has been a further drop in membership, it has in no way militated against the influence which the Sash has had in the political field. I think it would even be fair to say that in no previous year has the Sash made a greater impression among South Africans of all races than it has this year. This has, of course, in part been due to the foundations so well and patiently laid through past years and in part to the peculiar opportunities which this year has provided, of which the Sash has made good use.

We may well be entering this next year at a turning point in the history of the Sash. It may — in fact I believe it will — open up new opportunities for the Sash to become recognised as a responsible body whose opinion should be considered: a body whose motives need not therefore be suspect and a body of efficient workers with wide contacts which can be very useful in any effort to gain co-operation across the boundaries of party and group politics.

As this recognition gains ground, and it must gain ground if we go forward in the same objective way we have always done in the past, I believe that we shall attract more members. I say this because it is my considered opinion that there are three main reasons why we lose old members and do not replace them with new ones:

- The first is fear. People believe it is dangerous to protest against what the Government is doing.
- The second is prejudice. People do not want any kind of political change that will entail non-Whites

having a share of political responsibility, but as more and more people see the writing on the wall and swing to the Black Sash point of view, these two hindrances to membership will fall away and the time may come when it will even be fashionable again to belong to the Sash.

- The third reason why I believe we do not attract new members is that because of the sort of stigma that has been attached to the name "Black Sash" we have to conduct many of our most rewarding activities incognito. This results in people being quite unaware that the Sash is a dynamic, live organisation with a finger in a hundred pies and not just a group of women who, from time to time, stand around holding placards and draped in black sashes.

If we were able, without defeating our own ends, to act in our own name on all occasions, I believe we would attract new members of the right sort and I believe the time is no longer far distant when our name, instead of frightening people away, will be a draw.

Let us go forward, therefore, into the new year, aware and ready to face the difficulties and even dangers which may await us, but drawing new hope from a realisation that there are bright rifts in the clouds that darken the fair skies of our country.

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## IMPRESSIONS OF CONFERENCE

by HILDEGARDE SPOTTISWOODE

WHEN the conference opened, Cape Town very regrettably turned on a period of unseasonably intense heat, but the Prince's Hotel at Claremont provided us with comfortable chairs and peaceful surroundings. It was a great pleasure for us to see the many familiar faces as well as some unfamiliar ones — it is always revitalising to meet Sashers new to conference.

After Mrs. Petersen's stimulating opening address little time was lost in settling down to business, and it soon became evident that the Sash is more dynamic than ever before. The year behind us has been one of particular difficulties but the Sash has met them successfully. Reports from all Regions regarding assistance to the families of detainees, investigations into farm and convict labour, attendances at Native Commissioner's Courts, and active

## CONFERENCE—continued

work among those affected by the Pass Laws, prove the value of the practical work undertaken by the Sash.

Through first-hand experience we are able to make public the evil effects of discriminatory laws upon the large majority of our citizens, and of major significance is the contact made between Whites and non-Whites. In Cape Western a particular effort is being made to bring home to supporters of the Government the facts of the hardships suffered by the non-Whites.

In her summing-up, the chairman said it was evident from the regional reports that the Sash was doing work that no other organization was able to do; it was establishing bridges between people of varying political outlook and it should continue to exist even when the present Government went out of power.

On the first night of conference, Mr. Maurice Broughton, editor of the *Cape Argus*, and Mr. Patrick Duncan, editor of *Contact*, informally addressed a small audience of Sashers and their friends on "Political Trends and Developments."

## Notice to Quit

"Notice to Quit," a film on Group Areas, was shown on the third night. It caused a minor sensation. The most telling observation came from a young man who told us that the film had left him "swearing softly under his breath." We predict that this film will do much to convince the unconverted. Before the film a party was given where delegates met members of the Press. We were sumptuously fed by the "Rondebosch Ladies" and were glad of

### **SOUTH AFRICA: THE ROAD AHEAD**

Compiled by  
**HILDEGARDE SPOTTISWOODE**

★ ★ ★

The first edition of this book was sold out in September. A second edition is now available.

★ ★ ★

Sash members should order copies from:  
The Secretary, Black Sash, 4 Oakdale Flats,  
Main Street, Newlands, C.P.

*An ideal Christmas present.*

this opportunity to thank the Press for the magnificent support they give to the Sash.

One of the highlights of the conference was the account of the new venture, "Experiment in Consultation," started by Southern Transvaal. In Johannesburg a group of White and non-White women met on three occasions to discuss Income and Employment, Parents and Children, and Education and Leisure. This is something all Sash branches could do, and in so doing could reap a rich reward in warmth of human contact and understanding.

Another highlight was Mrs. Stott's concise analysis of trends in political thought, and of the fears and mistrusts that beset most groups in South Africa. Here the Sash can do much to break down the barriers between groups. In the discussion that followed there emerged once more the fact that the Sash is in agreement on matters of principle, but has its inevitable differences on the methods by which it can best achieve its aims. But it is just these varying approaches to our problems that make us what we are—a living organisation.

During conference the fate of the Central Executive was debated. It was difficult for those sitting at the top table to refrain from loud cheers of relief when it was unanimously decided that the C.E. should be abolished in favour of a Headquarters Region. Cape Western is to be the new headquarters.

## Bonds of Friendship

Mrs. E. Stott was elected national president of the Sash—an honour she richly deserves. To Mrs. Molly Petersen, the retiring president, now national vice-president, we owe gratitude for her term of wise leadership.

On the last morning of conference a glazed look came over most of us, induced perhaps by the labours of the past three days, perhaps by the heat, but mostly I think by the inevitable "amendments to the Constitution" without which no Sash conference seems to be complete. We lolled in our chairs and kicked off our shoes under the tables. But fortunately some new resolutions, left to be dealt with "if we had time," brought us to life again and caused some good-humoured though strong differences of opinion.

All of us, I believe, left the 1960 conference with firmer bonds of friendship, renewed admiration of the initiative and hard work of others and, in the words of a press statement, a greater determination to "continue to work—as we have for the past three years—for a constitution that will safeguard the basic rights and liberties of all South Africans and make inviolate the rule of law."